FREE ISSUE 342 MAY 19 - JUNE 1, 1992 1041-3812

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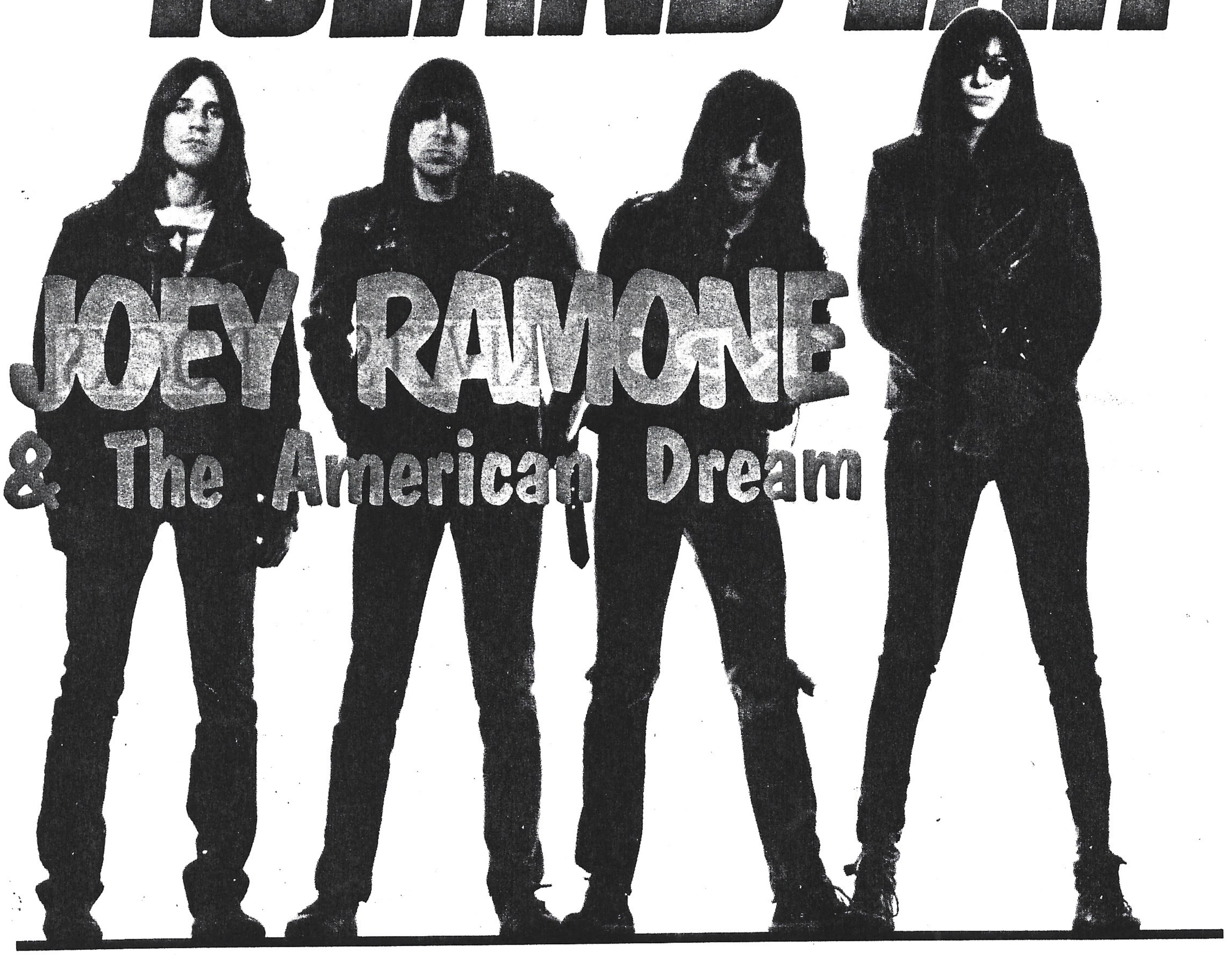

SUGARCUBES • THE JUDYBATS • FIREHOUSE
DEVONSQUARE • WAYNE COTTER

LIVE! HOWARD JONES • VAN MORRISON
LYLE LOVETT • SKID ROW • TORI AMOS

LOCALLY: JOHN LAMERE • PARADISE ALLEY
THE PAUL WEISS BAND

RAMONE

erican Dream

By Danny McCue

I don't think so [laughs]. Because they're not really doing anything that unique. They have some good songs, but I don't really see it sustaining. At the same time, I think it's great that it excites kids and makes them want to play exciting music too — that's the healthy thing about it: having a so-called punk band with the number one album in America is great, because instead of kids wanting to play C&C Music Factory, they'll want to create exciting situations of their own.

Your current record company bio implies that many of your classic songs were inspired by experiences on the road. How does the environment that you're in effect what you come up with as a songwriter?

Our songs have been inspired by all kinds of things, incidences on the road, life, films, horror movies, TV, relationships, things that piss you off — there are a number of different topics there [laughs], and then there are all kinds of topical things too, politics and stuff.

As a Brown supporter, what do you do now that the primary is over?

Well, I still like the guy... because he wanted to change the system, he didn't just want to smooth it over. The problem is that he's perceived as a radical, and then having Jesse Jackson on the ticket, who's also considered a radical, really scared a lot of people off. And the Flat Tax was just too vague... I mean, he would talk about the way it effected the people in the lower tax brackets and he said he was going to make alterations on it, but he was never really clear about what they were... but everything else I thought was great. I still support him. I don't like Clinton because I think he's just what they say he is. I think he's full of shit [laughs]. I don't know, **I want to see a Democrat in the White House after the next election, but then it's not enough to say that because look: Tipper Gore's a Democrat too [laughs].** It's kind of slim-pickins right now so... I don't know... you just can't dismiss everybody, because you've got to be responsible and concerned, and you've got to vote.

Dee Dee was a big contributor to the Ramones' catalog and now he's long gone. Do you miss him as a writer for the band?

Actually Dee Dee contributed three songs to the new album, and they're three really great songs. The major songwriters were always me and Dee Dee, and I do miss him because Dee Dee was a real creative person; what excited him was the music and coming up with really cool ideas, and that's what kind of keeps me going too, the creative end. So I miss that part of Dee Dee.

How's the relationship between the band and Dee Dee now?

Things are so much better now that Dee Dee's not in the band. I feel the band is more exciting now with C.J. in it, it's a lot stronger and a lot tighter in terms of the members. To me, C.J. brings this really great healthy enthusiasm into the band, and this really fresh attitude. He's also a great bass player, he sings, he moves great, so he makes it more exciting for me and I really enjoy myself in the band in a way that I never had before. I find it more inspiring, as far as songwriting and performing and just being part of the group.

Each of your studio albums is very different in some way from the one that precedes or follows it. Do you work up a new concept each time you enter the studio, or do you just go in and see what you've got?

No... actually, this is the best album we've ever made. It's really exciting and fresh and it's not like anything we've ever done before. It's definitely a turning point.

Have you felt this way just after finishing albums in the past, or do you think this album's really special, really it?

This one is really it. I mean, I felt excited about *Too Tough To Die*, but the songs I've contributed to this album are the best I've ever written. This is the album I've always wanted to make, that I've always dreamed about. Ed Stasium produced it, and it's the first time we've worked with him in six years, so in that respect it's a real reunion. And also, I guess, with me, I just got in this real binge of creativity. Plus it's like, the best singing I've ever done. I've come a long way in the last few years.

Are there outside factors regarding that, or is it just internal band stuff?

The internal band stuff plays a major role, but then, as far as myself... well, I'm sober these days, so all the blockage has been removed. The creativity really flows now. Everything is a lot easier, and I find things far more exciting and inspiring.

Last time I talked to the band both Johnny and Marky said that there are albums in your catalog that they didn't like; for Johnny it was Pleasant Dreams; *for Marky,* Subterranean Jungle. *As a working band, how have you managed to get yourselves back on track after falling into a rut?*

Well, up to *Road to Ruin*, we more or less produced ourselves with the help of Tommy Erdelyi and Ed Stasium, and then with *End of the Century* it became an experiment. Phil Spector really wanted to work with us, and so we tried it out. With *Pleasant Dreams*... well... I wanted to work with Steve Lillywhite in those days (while we were in England I had heard Johnny Thunders' "So Alone," and loved it and loved the production), but at the time he was just starting out and the answer I got was, "What kind of track record does he have?" Which I thought was real ignorant, because the idea is to be adventurous and fresh and new. But I think Sire's idea was to have us work with someone who would help us get a hit. They chose Graham Gould because he had written all of those great songs for the Yardbirds and the Hollies... and I mean, *Pleasant Dreams*, as far as the songwriting went, is a great record, it's just that the production wasn't right-on for that period of time. That album was made in 1981, and by that point the Clash and people like that were happening... and their were some songs that weren't served well by the production. "The KKK Took My Baby Away" didn't come across the way it should have; it lacked aggression. But then there were other songs that really had 'it' and sounded great, like "We Want The Airwaves."

So is getting back on track simply a case of working with the right person?

Well, then came *Subterranean Jungle*, for which we wanted to work with... well, Kenny Laguna, who manages Joan Jett, got involved, but then he got busy with Joan, so he put us onto Ritchie Cordell, who went on to co-produce the album with him. At that point it was the record company kind of telling us we had to go with a certain producer. We wanted to have an edge, because the edge had been kind of lacking... and Joan's earlier records sounded good, so we worked with them. *Subterranean Jungle* is kind of a classic album in its own right. A lot of people like it. But we were disgusted by that point and renegotiated our contract, telling the record company, in effect, that we were going to do it our own way or forget it. That's when we did *Too Tough To Die* and brought Ed Stasium back in and from then on we just continued to have control.

When it comes right down to it, what do the Ramones represent today?

[Long pause] The American-dream [laughs]. ●

JOHNNY JOEY C.J. MARKY